Food Safety at Home

Eating spoiled food can make you sick. Food can be spoiled even if it looks and smells all right.

Germs cause food to go bad. You can't see, smell, or feel germs. It takes one to three days to get sick from eating spoiled food. If you get sick, get help. Call your doctor or your local health department.

There are four easy ways to keep food from going bad:
1. **clean**
2. **keep apart**
3. **cook**
4. **chill**

Clean: Wash Hands and Counters Often
Germs can spread in the kitchen. They can get onto cutting boards, counters, sponges, forks, spoons, and knives. Here's how to fight germs:

- Wash your hands with hot, soapy water. Do this before touching food. Do it after using the bathroom, changing diapers, or touching pets.
- Wash your cutting boards, counters, dishes, forks, spoons, and knives. Use hot, soapy water. Do this after working with each food item.
- Use plastic cutting boards. Do not use wood cutting boards. It is easier for germs to hide in wood. Wash all boards in hot, soapy water after use. Boards can go into the dishwasher too.
- Use paper towels to clean up kitchen counters and tables. If you use cloth towels, wash them often in the hot cycle of the washing machine or in hot soapy water.

Keep Apart: Keep Raw Foods to Themselves
Germs can spread from one food product to another.

- Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood and their juices away from other foods.
- Keep these foods away from each other in your shopping cart and in your fridge.
- Use a special cutting board for raw meat only.
- Wash your hands after touching raw meat, poultry, or seafood. Wash cutting boards, dishes, forks, spoons, and knives that touch these foods. Use hot, soapy water.
- When you use a plate for raw meat, poultry, or seafood, don't put any other food on it until you wash it.

FOOD SAFETY

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Food Safety at Home (cont.)

Cook: Make Sure Food Is Very Hot

Foods need to get hot and stay hot when you cook them. Heat kills germs.

- Use a clean cooking thermometer. This handy tool tells you how hot a food gets inside. It helps you to know when foods are cooked all the way. Use it for meat, poultry, and other foods.
- Cook roasts and steaks to at least 145 degrees F. Whole poultry should reach 180 degrees F.
- Cook ground beef to at least 160 degrees F.
- Cook eggs until the yolks and whites are firm. Don't use recipes in which eggs remain raw or are partly cooked.
- Cooked fish should flake easily with a fork.
- Be careful if you use a microwave oven. Make sure that the food has no cold spots. Cold spots let germs live. Cover the food and stir it for even cooking. Rotate the dish once or twice while cooking.
- Bring sauces, soups and gravies to a boil when you reheat them. Heat other leftovers well, too. Leftovers should reach 165 degrees F.

Chill: Put Food in the Fridge Right Away

Set your fridge to 40 degrees F or colder. The cold helps slow the growth of germs in food. The freezer unit should read 0 degrees F. Check the readings once a month with a fridge thermometer.

- Put all cooked food and leftovers food in the fridge or freezer within two hours.
- Never thaw food by simply taking it out of the fridge! There are three safe ways to thaw food:
    1. in the **fridge**
    2. under **cold running water**
    3. in the **microwave**
- **Marinate foods in the fridge.**
- **Divide large amounts of leftovers.** Put them into small, shallow dishes with covers. That way, they can cool quickly in the fridge.
- **Don't pack the fridge too full.** The cool air must flow freely to keep food safe.

To Learn More...

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
Meat and Poultry Hotline
1-800-535-4555

U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
Food Information Hotline
1-800-SAFE FOOD

Partnership for Food Safety Education
www.fightbac.org
www.foodsafety.gov